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ABSTRACT

Ghost stories are universal. They are told and heard in different cultures throughout the world. They generally center around an incident or experience that is true, but that cannot be explained as an everyday occurence. True but unexplained experiences on the Blackfeet Reservation are told and retold in the winter months. In contemporary Blackfeet life these ghost stories are told primarily for entertainment and to some degree for social control. In an historic setting ghost stories were also told to reinforce Blackfeet religious beliefs, to explain events that were forewarned, and to link the known with the unknown. Those familiar with the traditional Blackfeet way of life and way of perceiving the world and universe will recognize the stories in this collection as remnants of those traditions--a part of Blackfeet culture that is still intact. Selections include "Marias River Ghost," "The Disappearing Paint," and "The Ghost of Big Nose," by Tom Found a Gun; "Berry Eater or Min-I-Yah," by Dave Wells; "Experience At Writing On Stone" by William Big Spring; "The Warrior Left to Die" by Francis Potts; "Blue Gray Blaze," "Ghost of Big Crow," and "The Ghost Ride" by Mike Swims Under; "How Four Children Got Their Names" and "Sun Calf" by Annie Short Robe Running Crane; and "Ghost of Black Butte" by Louie Fish. (Author/NEC)

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GHOST STORIES

Illustrated by Vernon No Runner

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION & WELFARE
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GHOST STORIES

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INTRODUCTION

Ghost stories are universal. They are told and heard in different cultures throughout the world. They generally center around an incident or experience that is true but that cannot be explained as an everyday occurence. There are similar, true, but unexplained experiences here on the Blackfeet Reservation that are told and retold, usually in the winter months.

Our purpose in recording these experiences is to show a part of Blackfeet culture that is still intact. In contemporary Blackfeet life ghost stories are told primarily for entertainment and to some degree for social control. In an historic setting ghost stories were told for these purposes and more: to reinforce Blackfeet religious beliefs, to explain events that were forewarned, and to link the known with the unknown. As Blackfeet storytellers say, "I-Tsi-Tse-Pa" - "It is something."

For those who are familiar with the traditional Blackfeet way of life and way of perceiving the world and universe, they will recognize these stories as remnants of those traditions.

Conrad La Fromboise
Blackfeet Heritage Program
January, 1979

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MARIAS RIVER GHOST

by Tom Found A Gun

This is a story both my grandpa, Chief Crow, and my grandma, Strikes With a Gun, told. They were my grandparents on my mother's side.

This happened at a time when game was scarce. My grandparents followed the Marias River looking for deer and antelope. The first night they camped in an open space alongside a big tree. It was late so grandpa didn't hunt. Instead they camped and got ready to sleep. When darkness came they could hear people. People singing, people dancing. My grandpa got up and looked out - nothing.

The singing and dancing went on all night. Sometime during the night the door on their teepee was thrown open, like someone was going to come in. No one entered, but my grandparents were afraid so they just lay there not sleeping. When it came morning, they broke camp and moved further on. But, that night they could still hear people talking. My grandpa figured the big tree where they camped had been an Indian burial tree, long ago. These spirits followed them for a long time afterwards until my grandparents finally moved back to where they usually hunted. Then the spirit sounds stopped.

BERRY EATER OR MIN-I-YAH

by Dave Wells

This story I want to tell you is about a man called "Min-i-yah" or Berry Eater. He lived across the line at a place they now call Gleichen, Alberta.

He was a very popular man - good to the people. Being a leader he helped run his tribe, the Blackfeet in Canada.

Min-i-yah was good-hearted to animals as well. One time as he rode out on horseback, he came upon an old camping ground. As he walked around where the people had camped long before, he heard howling off in the distance. He knew it was a dog's howling. He walked closer and found a small pup, crying for help. Min-i-yah could see that the dog was lonely and half starved. Picking up the dog, Min-i-yah told him, "Oh, my little dog, I'm goin' take you home, I'm not goin' to see you be lonely. I'll take you home and my home will be your home." Min-i-yah took the dog letting it lay on his coat on the ride home. When he got home, he told his wives, (Min-i-yah had two wives) "I've brought this little dog home. When we eat, we'll share up with him. He's a pitiful dog, so we'll take care of him."

That's what they did. Soon the little pup was full grown and fat.

It seems that men like Min-i-yah who are respected and good to the people always have someone who is jealous of them. Min-i-yah's enemies lived to the north and were trying bad medicine to kill him. One man in particular was trying to pay another man who had strong medicine to kill Min-i-yah. You see, medicine of

this kinds is so powerful it can do its work even if you're miles away in another place.

The jealous man approached this powerful man four times, each time offering him more horses, goods and money. But the man refused every time.

Finally, after the fourth time of being asked this man said, "Okay, I'll do it. I'll fix this Min-i-yah. You come to my teepee tonight and stay. We'll make medicine."

Now, Min-i-yah is far away in Gleichen, yet he knew what was going on. He felt it. He told his wives, "You know what's going on in the North? They're getting together to make bad medicine against me." As far away as he was, Min-i-yah knew what was going to happen. So he said to the women, "Okay, four nights straight we don't sleep at night. If we don't sleep in four nights straight, their medicine can't hurt me."

The man with medicine up North had made a doll out of rawhide. It looked just like a person. This man told the people with him, "This is Min-i-yah, sitting right here." He put the rawhide doll in front of him. "Everytime I show him this medicine, I'm going to ask, Min-i-yah, do you know this medicine? He's going to move his head if he knows it."

Soon the man showed the doll a small buckskin bag.

"Min-i-yah, do you know this?" And the doll shook its head, yes, he knew it.

He showed the doll another bag, and another, and another, asking if it knew the medicine. Everytime the doll shook its head. It knew all the medicine.

The man with medicine told the people around him, "This is the last one. My best one. If Min-i-yah knows it, there's nothing we can do."

He showed the bag to the doll, hitting it on the head. The doll didn't know the medicine. So the man said, "This is what will hit him. But I know Min-i-yah is keeping himself awake. When he falls asleep, this will get him."

Min-i-yah made sure he didn't fall asleep during the night and he made his wives stay awake. They would sleep during the daylight.

The man with medicine knew his medicine would reach Min-i-yah. On the fourth night he shot Min-i-yah with the medicine. He took a common pin and set it on the rawhide doll. Then he blew on it. Just that fast the medicine started to travel. It could go wherever it was meant to go, even if it was hundreds of miles away.

While this happened in the North, Min-i-yah let down his guard and on the fourth night he fell asleep.

The medicine hit him. There was no wound, or bleeding, but down on the instep of his foot it started to ache and pain him. It kept on aching worse and worse and making Min-i-yah sick. The medicine was meant to give him a long, slow death.

Min-i-yah began to suffer. He was skin and bones and slowly starving to death. He could only just lay waiting to die.

As he was laying on his bed, he looked at his little dog that he'd rescued. The dog looked back at him right in the eyes. Min-i-yah started talking to the dog. "My dog," he said, "My little dog. You look at me and you see what shape I'm in. I'm dying. Help me, my little

dog. I always share up with you and you're fat and healthy. Help me now, my dog. If I die, no one is going to be here to feed you and take care of you. Help me."

The dog listened to Min-i-yah, looking him right in the eyes. Min-i-yah knew the dog would help him. He called to his wife, "Take this bandage off my foot. My dog is going to doctor me."

Min-i-yah's foot and leg were swollen and that's where the dog started to lick. He licked all over Min-i-yah's foot and finally he started licking in the place where the medicine had hit. He licked for a long time. Finally, the sharp pains left Min-i-yah's foot. Min-i-yah called to his wife, telling her to look at his instep. He asked her what it was that was sticking him there. She looked and told him it was a small common pin. She was able to pull it out and she gave it to Min-i-yah.

He took it from her and put his own medicine on it. Then he blew on it and it disappeared, shooting towards the north. It went straight back to the man who sent it. In a few hours, the man in the North was dead.

Min-i-yah's dog had cured him. Till he was an old man, Min-i-yah cared for that little dog and treated him well.

THE DISAPPEARING PAINT

by Tom Found A Gun

This story took place during the war. It was in 1942 when I came home on a furlough from the army. My mother got Peter Oscar to pray for me so I'd have good luck and a safe return.

We were all there and Peter Oscar asked my uncle if he had any durham. You know, during those days they didn't hardly have cigarettes - they always had Bull Durham. Here I was, watching him. He poured that durham out on the palm of his hand and started rubbing it. As I watched him the durham turned red, dark red.

"Well, now I'll paint your face," he said. He painted a cross between my eyes.

We got through eating and pretty soon he said, "I know you want to go walk around town." Beverly Reevis and Katherine Grant were waiting for me to go downtown. He said, "You don't have to wash your face if you get shame of that paint."

In those days there were hardly any street lights. As we walked by the Yegen telephone light, Katherine looked at me and her eyes got just big. I asked her, "What's wrong?"

She said, "That paint - it's gone!"

I hadn't even washed my face. It was just like he was reading my mind when he said, "Go ahead, you can go to town with them, you don't have to wash your face for that paint to disappear."

Later, he told my mother, "Don't worry, he'll come back."

EXPERIENCE AT WRITING ON STONE

by William Big Spring

We started up to Writing on Stone one Sunday afternoon, back in 1958. Writing on Stone is a park, right on the border of the United States and Canada, near the town of Aden on Milk River. No one knows for sure what the markings on the rocks mean. They are hundreds of years old. In 1850, people were trying to find out what these "writings" represented. The Indians then said they had been done by the "old" people but no one could say if they were prophecies or records of things that had already happened. It was a really nice day and we reached Writing on Stone just as it turned dusk - that time of the day when it's not daylight and it's not dark. I got out of the car to go and look at the writings on the rocks. As I went through I was disappointed that so many of them were ruined. Most were painted over or damaged so that you couldn't make them out.

As I walked further on I heard a strange noise coming down through the rocks. I didn't pay much attention to it at first but pretty soon these sounds were all that I could hear.

All of a sudden when I got to the end of the rocks and looked down I could see teepees set up on the flat. I saw children running around. I saw campfires and everybody was happy. The whole camp was happy. It was as real as when you look at another person next to you.

I got such a strange feeling. I slowly moved away. The nape of my neck felt so strange. I took a few more steps backward. Pretty soon I turned about. I didn't

actually run back to the car, but I got there as quickly as I could.

I don't know what they were, but I saw them. I told myself then and there I'd never return at that time of the day again.

I never told anybody of this until two years later when I told my wife.

THE GHOST OF BIG NOSE

by Tom Found A Gun

Up around Badger Creek, there's some graves on a spot called Big Nose. Most of those graves are Big Nose's family. He's buried up there, too.

I was coming from Heart Butte one time with Harry Morgan. We had brought some horses out there. When we rode up by Big Nose, we saw a light. It would go up, so high, in the air.

Harry said to me, "You think they're going to do something to us - them old people?"

I told him, "I don't know." I was getting scared. Then I said, "Let's go check."

We couldn't even get near those graves. Our horses would dodge and get jumpy. We wanted to get closer to that light but the horses wouldn't go any further.

The hair on my neck stood up and my back felt thick. Harry must have felt the same way. So we just whipped our horses and beat it out of there!

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THE WARRIOR LEFT TO DIE

by Francis Potts

There was a warrior who had been shot and left behind by his friends. Before his companions left him they fixed a shelter over him and left dry meat hanging up. They left some water and gave him a long stick to knock down the dried meat to eat.

His companions gave him up for dead in case he might come out of it, they left these provisions for him. The warrior lay under this shelter for a long time. He really suffered with this wound, growing weak and helpless. One day he heard a sound and he knew a bear was close to the shelter. The bear was nosing around to see what was inside.

The warrior started speaking to the bear in human talk and praying to him. He told the bear that he didn't have much flesh on him and the bear wouldn't get much to eat. He told the bear all he had was some dry meat and he knocked pieces of the meat off with his stick and pushed them towards the bear.

The bear ate the dry meat. He must have realized that this man was praying to him and wanting his mercy. He dragged the man out.

The man thought, "Well, he's going to kill me now." The bear started digging a hole. The man thought, "This is where that bear's going to put me after he's eaten me." The man didn't know what was going on but he had given up all hope. Meantime, the bear threw him in the hole and covered him up. The bear was making medicine. Four times he threw the man in the hole and four times the bear took him out.

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The man survived! He was in good health again. So they stayed there by the shelter where the bear had made medicine. While they were there, a coyote came to them and wanted to stay. They all lived together and when the man talked to the bear and coyote they understood him and he could understand their language.

They lived close to one another until the man was ready to go to his people. He told the bear, "Take me back home." The three of them traveled toward Fort Benton, since the man figured his people would be camped there. As they traveled the man rode on the bear's back. He'd ride him and the coyote would go on the hills and ridges as a scout and look around. If he saw any people, he'd run back and warn the bear and the man. The bear and the man would hide out in the brush until it was clear.

I don't know how many nights it took them to make this trip. Eventually, they got to Fort Benton. That's where the peope were. The man told his companions, the bear and coyote, "This is a people's camp. If they catch you, they'll kill you. Go back to the wilderness.

Well, the man entered the camp. That night he heard the bear howl, like he was crying. Then the coyote began to cry. He went and called out to them to leave. He told the people in camp not to pay attention to the noises.

This crying continued for quite a few nights, then it stopped. The animals finally left and didn't bother the man anymore. Some people in the camp thought the animals were spooking the man, but they were just lonesome for him.

BLUE GRAY BLAZE

by Mike Swims Under

This story took place when my dad was a policeman at Old Agency. Sometimes he had to go down and stay at the police station to answer the phone and take care of any trouble that might come up. Joe Trombley was his interpreter on phone calls, because my dad couldn't speak English.

In those days cattlemen and ranchers had to get permits if they wanted to butcher a cow. One day my dad had a permit to bring to Owl Child, who lived by Four Horn Lake.

He got to Owl Child's place in the afternoon, and Owl Child invited him to stay and have some meat after they butchered. They waited till evening, when it was cool, to kill the cow and butcher it. Dad was in a hurry. He had to be back at Old Agency in case there was a telephone call or an emergency. But he stayed on for supper, since they'd invited him.

It was late when he finally got started - pitch dark out. Soon he came up over the hill and could see lights. He knew he was getting close to Old Agency. All of a sudden he saw a light coming up. Down towards the school he saw the light coming.

He thought someone was out walking with a lantern. He rode to the bottom and he saw the light coming up a little hill. It was coming up the main road. My dad thought, "Gee, that light sure is coming up fast. Must be someone on a saddle horse."

The light disappeared from sight over the hill. My

dad came over the hill and saw it right before him on the road. It was blazing. The blaze went low - a blue-gray blaze. He stopped. He just knew what was there - a ghost.

My dad talked to it. "Where you're coming from, that's where I stay. I came from Owl Child's. You must be going up that way."

The light was right in front of him now. "Move out of the way, so I can go," my dad told it. It wouldn't move. He told it, "I'll go this way - east of you, and you can go the other way." My dad turned his horse. The light blazed up trying to head him off. My dad stopped his horse and told the light, "I quit. You go that way and I'll go on up." The light went back to the same place on the road. Dad was trying to see better in the dark. He told the light, "I'll go to the west of you." He started out and the light moved to head him off again.

Dad stopped, turned back and started to pray. "Pity me," he prayed to this light. "Please, can I go through? You can go too. I'm begging you, maybe you don't fear anybody. Well, I'm going to go through." He spurred his horse and the horse livened up. Then they took off. He kicked his horse and started to jump over the light.

My dad saw the glow of that light right underneath his horse - a blue light. When he landed on the other side he looked back and shot six times. Then he whipped his horse for home, keeping it up all the way back to Old Agency.

HOW FOUR CHILDREN GOT THEIR NAMES

by Annie Short Robe Running Crane

My husband Pete used to help all the people in his community. The people around here used to sell hay to the government. Pete and his parents were haying for this one fellow.

Pete told his father, "Dad, I'm going to go home. I'm too lonesome. I don't like it here."

And his dad said, "Well, the boss is going to kill a beef tomorrow, and then you can go home."

He said, "No, I want to go home. I'll just take my bed roll and my belongings and go home."

Finally, his mother rolled up his bed, got it ready and gave him some things to eat along the way.

He started home and when he got to his place, he put up his horse and he went on into his house. His dog was outside. It wasn't very long after he went to bed that he heard dogs barking. They were chasing someone. He heard someone walk to the door, spurs jingling.

Pete told him, "Come on in." Pete said he had locked the door. But this person walked right through the door.

Later Pete told us, "I don't know if I went to sleep or if I died or what, but anyway, I must've been sleeping all this time. When I woke up the next morning, mid-morning, I heard people talking. I thought I was still sleeping and that people were out already."

When he woke up and looked out, there were four kids sitting outside. The kids turned around and looked

at Pete and they all called one another by name. They called each other by name - Medicine Holler, Hollers First, Hollers In The Middle, and Hollers Last. Then they all left. They went around the corner and disappeared into the brush.

After the kids had disappeared he thought, "Well, I'll go water my horse and see what's around there. He led his horse to the river and standing there, looking toward the road, he saw his parents moving home. His brothers and sisters, too, were approaching. When they arrived Pete helped them unload. His mother cooked dinner and as they were eating he told them what happened.

"I got spooked last night," he said, "and this morning I woke up and I heard some kids talking outside and I saw these four kids."

His dad said, "I told you last night to wait and come home with us today, I told you we were going to come home today." His dad told him, "That spirit roams all over here, he goes to every house in the community and bothers everybody. He wears spurs and he's always spooking everyone around the neighborhood. We told you not to go any place. He's a very bad ghost. And those kids, they could have killed you, if they wanted to."

So Pete named his kids after these spirits, the ones he saw.

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GHOST OF BLACK BUTTE

by Louie Fish

We used to camp up at East Glacier Park while the old folks met the train. The Great Northern ran the railroad back then bringing tourists to the Park and every morning the Indians would meet the train. We'd stay there all summer - old George Bull Child, Peter Last Star, Wallace Night Gun and my dad, Fish Wolf Robe and all their families.

During this one summer, my brother and I were camped south of Browning on Two Medicine, on the straightaway going towards Little Badger. That's when they were fixing the old road and a lot of us were camped downriver on the south side.

Willie, my brother, and I were running low on food so he told me, "Ride on over to the Park. See if Mom and Dad can give us something; any kind of rations they can spare."

I had an old horse, a bay. I saddled up and took off just before noon. I went straight up by Bill Show's place, to the top of the hill. There's a fork that comes from Deep Creek into the Two Medicine and there's a hill they call Black Butte. I rode up there, got off my horse and started rolling a Bull Durham cigarette. I began looking around and noticed a lot of white bones scattered all over the top of the hill. I gathered them up and piled them in one place. Then just when I turned around, I saw something. It looked like a round, white rock. I went over and dug around it on one side. I saw it was the head of a skeleton - a skull.

I just looked at it, then covered it back up. I piled

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all the bones over the top of it. I rolled another cigarette and I spoke, "Whoever you are, here's a cigarette right here, and I'm putting matches by it so you can smoke. When I come back through, I'll bring either cigars or cigarettes." I got back on my horse and started up.

When I got to the Park, at the Big Hotel, it was about 2:00 o'clock. Pretty soon my dad and some others came down, all dressed in buckskin clothes. My mother started to cook for dinner. I told her, "Well, I just came up to get a few rations from you. Whatever you can give us. We're just out of everything where we're camped."

She told me that as soon as I had eaten she would get some food together for me. Just then my dad came down and he was sure glad to see me. He asked me which way I had come and I told him what had happened up on Black Butte. "That's real good you gathered them all up," he said. "They might bring you good luck."

Then he started to tie up the two gunny sacks of groceries my mom had given me. He told me, "Don't try and run that horse. These might come untied. But, I'm tying them up good so they won't slip off."

It was getting late. So I started back down, towards Big Spring's ranch. I just kept a-going. As it got dark I came up on the same spot again, where I had put the cigarette. It was darker by now and I was worrying about myself. Right straight across from Show's ranch there's a steep cliff. I was afraid of it. So I put more cigarettes by that pile of bones and I began to talk to what was there, asking if it would help me out. "If you can understand me, what I'm asking you, please lead the way. I'm kind of scared to take that cliff there. My horse is jumpy."

I got back on my horse and started out. Just when

I reached the bottom of the hill, I saw a light. I figured someone was carrying a lantern - one of those old time lights - and I tried to catch up to them because they had light.

When I got about a hundred feet away, the light dimmed. I could just barely see it. All at once, a flame shot up - a blue flame. It shot up bright like someone had turned that lantern up full blast. "Who's ever down there must be playing a trick on me," I thought.

When I started out again I saw another light in front of me. Then the same thing happened again. When I got close to the light, the flame shot straight up into the air. That blue flame - blue light - it kept doing that while I was riding down to the road.

As I got ready to come off the steep hill, I thought to myself, "I'll get off this horse and lead him down the hill." But the horse kept backing up; wouldn't go. I was jerking the lines trying to get him to move.

I finally got back on the horse and we went quite a-ways, with that light ahead of me. It didn't go out - it kept going. I just followed that light coming down the old wagon road, till I got to where the trees are. The road goes in there. It was pitch dark, I couldn't see the road, just the light, ahead of me. It was leading me, leading me to the camp.

When I got near our camp, all the dogs started barking. They'd jump for me and almost bite me. The horse started kicking those dogs. I kept a-going - that horse wanted to jump - wanted to take off. I just kept holding the lines back.

I got to the camp. A light was on in the tent, so I called to my brother, "I'm back Willie," and he came running out to me.

"You better go on in. I'll take care of everything," Willie said.

I got off my horse and just the minute I walked in that tent and smelled that fire I passed out. When I came to, Willie said, "Who was that guy you was riding with - riding double?"

I told him, "There was nobody."

Willie continued, "There was somebody. I started going near that horse and he jumped off. The dogs took in after him, back towards where you came from."

I didn't say anything right off, cause I didn't feel like anything was with me. There's some people when they get that way, you know, their backs feel just thick. They're scared.

Then I explained to my brother what happened. "They're the ones that brought you home," he said. "If they were bad ones, they could of made you go over that bank. They could of hurt you."

Those spirits took me home and I didn't feel anyway.

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GHOST OF BIG CROW

by Mike Swims Under

I'm going to tell you this story about my mother's dad, my grandfather. His name was Big Crow. He died in 1903, and the family buried him on the north side of their house. He laid there for one year until the next spring when this all started to happen.

My dad was a policeman down at the Old Agency and was gone from the house one night. My mother, her sister and my two cousins were home alone.

This night a spirit came. It started bothering them. They couldn't sleep. They heard a bell ringing all over the house. They blew out their kerosene light first thing, but it still bothered them.

Early the next morning, my dad came back from Old Agency and my mother told him about it. "A spirit bothered us all night." They didn't know who it was.

That night, the next night and the following night - same way - that spirit came. They'd blow out the lights. They heard singing and whispering.

Well, some way this spirit made my dad understand. He told my dad, "I'm Big Crow. I've come because I love my two daughters. I want to stay with them but they're scared of me. That's why I came over - to stay with them."

My dad told my mother why her dad's spirit had come back and what he wanted. "He wants you to go with him, because he loves you."

My mother refused, "No, I'm scared." So he told

her sister. She didn't want to go either because she was scared.

The spirit knew this. "I know my daughters are scared."

"Well, then," my dad told him, "I'll go with you. You take me." That made the spirit happy. "Alright, alright. I'm glad, because I love you people."

Well, that night, almost at midnight, something made a power. It knocked my dad out, like he was dead. Then, all over the house - whistling, whistling. All that night. Then, a bell jingled all around - like a dancing bell. The spirit sang. No one slept all night. Then toward morning, about sunrise, the spirit disappeared. My dad came to - woke up. "Well," he told my mother, "Now I'm with you. And that spirits gone but he'll come again tonight."

That night - same way. They blew the lamps out and soon they heard that bell. My mother, her sister and kids just piled on the bed and covered up. They were afraid of him.

On the fourth night they were getting used to it, but they were still scared all that time. Now my dad was with the spirit; they accepted each other. It would show him what to do - how to do it. From then on it was with him, guiding him all those years. The same spring this had happened, my mother's mother, my grandmother, married again. She married Sure Chief.

I was five or six when I started hearing this spirit. We were used to it. First thing, we'd blow out the light. Then the bell would come, jingling right in front of our faces. You could hear that bell all over. We'd cover up and listen when it came.

It would talk to my dad. It let him know what was going to happen ahead of time. It let my dad know these things. Sometimes he'd guide my dad in the evenings when dad was out on horseback.

I can remember hearing the spirit at night for many years.

Then in 1918, we moved to Heart Butte. My sister and brother went to school there. One morning, we were all sleeping on the floor. Some were in the west corner. We were sleeping in the east corner of the house. It started breaking daylight when I heard the spirit right straight up from me, right above, where I lay in that corner. It came the same way as before. I knew it was him. I could understand when he called to my mother and my dad answered, "Ahhh! Ahhh!" The spirit talked long, maybe about four minutes. In the west corner, it started talking. And moved to the south corner, same way - talking. Sometimes it would sing. We heard it in the east corner, south and west corner. Talking, singing.

My dad told my mother, "Well, there's your dad. He's got your mother back. Now they're going to go away. They're together. He thanks everything for what's with him. And he prays for us to get along together, us and our kids. They're trying to go away now. He's got your mother with him. He's going to leave me now. But, he'll come back sometimes to check on us."

That's the last time we heard the spirit come around like that - it was when my grandmother died, the fall of 1918.

SUN CALF

by Annie Short Robe Running Crane

This story is about a young man from up North, the Blackfeet Indian Reservation. His name is Sun Calf. He's from Gleichen, Alberta. He and his friend were partying and drinking. He was having trouble with his mother and hit her. He knocked her out and thought he killed her. The people all around told one another, "Sun Calf has killed his mother."

He became afraid and ran away. The Red Coats saw him run down a coulee to the point of a hill. It was like a river with deep wash-outs. He came upon an Indian burial ground. They used to pile up brush like a teepee and put their dead in there. All they used to do is cover their dead up with a blanket. He went into the biggest one and crawled under a dead body and covered himself up. Soon the Red Coats were all around.

One said, "I saw him jump in this one."

Another Red Coat said, "There is only one dead body in here."

They were looking in the places where all these dead ones were buried. It soon got dark, with just a little daylight remaining. They couldn't find him and left.

He heard voices and people making noise. He thought, "This is the only place I can hide." He thought he had killed his mother.

"I came here to commit suicide. If you want to kill me, kill me."

Then he heard a voice say, "It is not good. Let's

kill him and throw him out." And he heard a meeting begin - talking.

Soon it was morning. He had been hiding there for two days. All the voices would was, "We're going to kill you and throw you out."

And he said, "Well, if you're going to kill me, kill me." But they wouldn't bother him.

The third day the same thing happened. On the fourth day he heard a voice say, "He has come here for our protection and for us to save him. All you do is say you're going to kill him and throw him out. We should give him something to protect himself and to be lucky and to help others."

When he looked up, there were people standing and sitting all around him. They told him, "We are going to give you a gift of power to protect yourself. You will be caught by the Red Coats but nothing will happen to you. Your mother is okay and nothing is wrong with her." They gave him different powers.

One gave him the gift of power to play hand-game. "When you play hand-game and get guessed, all you have to do is blow on your hand and they will never beat you, they'll never guess you."

One gave him the power to doctor people. Another, a gift for drumming. One gave him the use of boiling rocks to make people well. One gave him the power to use different herbs and medicine roots.

They said, "All you have to do is boil these and if a woman is really sick and just breathing, all you have to do is boil these roots and let her drink it, and she will get well."

It was getting towards morning and one person, a white man, came up to him. He had whiskers and he told him, "I'm going to give you a gift of chewing tobacco. When you get locked up, no matter how big the locks are, all you have to do is spit on them and the doors will open. Or if you're hand-cuffed, all you have to do is spit on them and they will come apart. No matter how hard these locks are to open, you will be free."

Then Sun Calf returned home. He went back to his mother, his home.

His mother told him, "The Red Coats are going to come after you for fighting and drinking. They keep coming every day to see if you are here."

And so, he said, "I'm not going to run anymore. That's okay if they catch me, I'm not going to run away anymore."

Finally, the Red Coats came after him. They took him to jail, a place called Red River. When a person does something really bad, that's where they bring him. They put Sun Calf behind bars in prison. There were many doors that locked behind him. They placed him in a hole. There was just enough room to sit down. Everything was rock. Even the chair he sat on and the place he ate at was rock. They put handcuffs on him, on his legs and on his hands, and locked him up. They chained him to the wall. They let him have his chewing tobacco and a spitoon to spit in.

That's all he had. At noon they came to feed him. He was sitting on a hard rock. He ate his dinner and got tired sitting there. Finally he fell asleep as it started getting dark. He was very tired sitting there hand-cuffed to the wall, legs and hands.

He thought, "I'll use my chewing tobacco and see

how it works." So he spit on his cuffs, on his hands, his arms, and they came apart. He spit on his ankles, the cuffs on his ankles, and they came off.

He got up, walked around, looked around. He had no way of getting out, for they put him down with a rope into this hole. There was no door or any way to get out. Finally the guard came to his cell. He looked down and saw him walking around. He wasn't cuffed to the wall. So the guard raised him up, put him in a different cell.

Sun Calf told the guard, "I'm very tired. Can I have a place to lay down?"

So the guard put him in a cell with a bed. That's where he stayed for about half a year. Finally he tired of staying there and spit on the lock. The door opened. The guards saw him walking around outside and went over to look at the cell. The locks were open and the guards were very surprised. They wondered how he got out. Again, Sun Calf tired of the prison and thought, "Well, I'm going home."

He went out again and spit on the locks and left the prison for home.

The mounties, Red Coats, started looking, looking for him. They were just about to catch up with him when - well, he was also given the power to turn invisible when he was at that Indian burial ground. So he did. Everytime the Red Coats would catch up with him, he'd become invisible. Then he'd go again and pretty soon the Red Coats quit. They said, "We'll never catch him, he turns invisible, so we might as well let him go." Sun Calf started on home.

I don't know how far he got when he came to a Cree Village. He stayed at this Cree Village for quite a while, visiting, getting acquainted with the people. Soon

he was all rested up. He continued home. When he arrived, he stayed for a long time and finally got married. After he married, people got curious and started coming to visit. He lived with these people for a long time.

One time, a man came over and gave him a pipe. He said, "My wife is very sick, and my child. I would like you to come and help her if you could."

They knew he had the powers to heal people, that's why they came to him. This person told him, "I have two horses and a wagon, and it's yours if you will doctor my wife and child."

Sun Calf told him, "Don't worry, go home. I'll fix her some root medicine and she'll get well." He said, "I will fix the root medicine and you give it to that woman."

So he began fixing his medicine and told his wife, "Now go over and give it to that woman who is very sick so she will get well.

His wife made the woman drink all the root medicine, and she soon grew well. She lived to be a very, very old lady. After she got better she held a feast for Sun Calf, because he had cured her. He received good, blankets and some horses, and that was her gift to him for getting well. They always had a feast and giveaway, in appreciation for things that others do for them. So this medicine man got a lot of gifts from different ones for helping the woman get well.

A short time after that, the Red Coats came again and took Sun Calf back to serve the remainder of his prison term. He stayed there for a while and again he got tired of it. He made the same escape. All he had to do was repeat the same thing again and he got out and returned home. His wife was very young but while he

was gone she had died in childbirth.

After he was home for a while and his in-laws were around him, they liked him so much they told him, "My boy, we're going to take you as our own son."

They were very good to him. They did everything for him. Whenever he came, he was treated just like a son. He was home for awhile, and the old lady that had taken him for a son died in the meantime.

Again the police searched for him and again caught him. This time they took all the things he had on him. His bracelets, his necklaces and his little pouch he carried his roots and medicine in were taken from him.

A young Indian policeman had taken all his belongings and put them in his pocket - pinned them in his pocket.

An older Indian policeman told the others, "You'll never get to keep them because he has a lot of powers. Before we get home he'll have them all back."

The other said, "Oh, he's not that powerful to take these back."

They kept on going on horseback. As they were going along the policeman would feel in his pocket. They got to a river and this time when he felt in his pocket the belongings were gone.

The older policeman told his younger brother, "I told you you'd never get to keep them. He's probably got them back now. In the morning we'll go open him up at the jail. You can see him."

When the policeman got back to the jailhouse, they saw him walking around outside. He had his bracelets and his necklaces and his little pouch with

him.

Sun Calf told them, "I don't like to be locked up."

One policeman asked, "Could I have those bracelets and those roots in your pouch?"

Sun Calf said, "No, they are nothing, you wouldn't make use of them anyway."

Sun Calf came to the State side. The police over on the Canadian side told the police over here, "If he comes over the line, you folks arrest him and send him back."

So the police on the State side arrested him and put him in jail and he got out. And they caught him again. When they did the police said, "We'll just give him a horse and something to eat and he can go home on his own." So that's what they did. He stayed around for a while, before he wanted to return home.

The police, old Middle Rider and some others, had a warrant for his arrest to send him back to Canada. They chased him into the thick brush, and he hid behind a big tree. Then he disappeared.

The police looked all over for him and finally one said, "Well, we'll just have to wait and catch him again and send him home on his own."

Later they were waiting around the jailhouse for him. Finally he came. They gave him a horse and a saddle, some blankets and clothes. They gave him some grub to eat and told him to go home. When he got on the Canadian side he was arrested again and sent back to prison. But they knew they couldn't keep him so they let him go.

He returned to live on the State side. At the place he stayed a lot of men played hand game. One fellow had

lost all his belongings, his hat and his boots - everything, playing hand game.

The fellow went home and told his wife, "Could you give me something to bet again. I'm going to play and see if I can get all my things back."

This was the fellow with whom Sun Calf lived.

Sun Calf asked the man's wife, "What are you doing?"

"Well, your partner there, he lost all his belongings last night at the hand game, so I'm giving him something to bet again," she said.

"Sun Calf told her, "No, don't give him anything. I'll go with him and we'll play."

When these two friends got to the hand game Sun Calf started drumming and singing while the rest played. Finally his partner gave him the bones to hide. They kept playing and soon his friend won his clothes back, his boots and his hat. Everything he had lost, he won back. They were playing against the Crees. Sun Calf's friend won everything back. The Crees started to bet all their beadwork and everything else they had.

Just about morning Sun Calf told his partner, "We'd better quit now and go home."

So they quit and they got everything together and started home. When they got there, he gave Sun Calf a gift of what they had won - some of the buckskin outfits, the beaded work, boots and clothes.

THE GHOST RIDER

by Mike Swims Under

Another story my dad told me happened on Birch Creek.

Pete Eagle had sent Pete Marceau and Barney Boss Ribs for some liquor and my dad was with them. They went into Dupuyer, walked around there a good part of the day, then brought their liquor and started up. On the south side of Birch Creek, there's a riding road; they call it Seven Mile Lane. That's the way they came, on horseback. They came to Birch Creek. It was already late at night. They crossed Birch Creek right below Abe Rutherford's place, on an old wagon trail. They came up on the bank on the other side into a lot of brush.

They heard something - a horse. They turned and looked back. There was a rider coming, only fifty yards away.

They all stopped. It was moonlight. In moonlight, you can see a long ways. Soon as they stopped, this rider stopped, too. He leaned low on his horse, in the saddle, his horse, black and bally.

The men hollared to him. "Come on partner, we've got drinks. We'll give you a drink. Come over, we're alright. We're not policemen."

The rider was quiet but they could hear his horse's bridle jingling. The horse turned his head everywhere, looking around, real lively.

They yelled to that rider again, "Come on! Oh, we'll come over there. We'll give you this." And they motioned to him with their bottle.

As soon as they turned their horses, the rider stood up in his stirrups. Then he turned his horse and started going back towards the brush.

So they chased him but they couldn't catch up. They could just keep an even distance from him. They were on fast horses. Pete Marceau had race horses, really fast, and so did Barney Boss Ribs. My dad was just breaking his horse and he was running fast, too. But they couldn't catch him. They stayed the same distance behind him.

They chased him to the brush, right into the thickest part. But there was no sound of cracking brush. Nothing.

They turned around, back the way they had come, and they saw him. He reappeared, riding along, the same way.

They stopped and called to him, "Come on!" He leaned down, the same way, on his saddle horn. He had a hat on.

"Come on, have a drink." He didn't answer.

They started toward him but he turned his horse back the way he had come. The men chased after him, over the bank and to the brush. He rode into the brush, but there was no sound. My dad rode along the brush, real slow. Still, no sounds.

The men told my dad, "It's a ghost, a spirit." They sat on their horses and took a drink from the bottle.

My dad told Barney and Pete, "I've got a six-shooter. This time I'm going to shoot him. We're going to chase him and when I holler, you guys spread out."

So they called to the rider again. "You want a drink?"

"Okay, we're going to chase you." The rider stood up in the stirrups and then turned his horse towards the brush. The three of them took in after him. About halfway to the brush, my dad hollered, "You guys spread out! I'm going to shoot!"

About six shots, and the rider went over. My dad followed, right in to where he fell. But there was nothing.

My dad told his partners, "Well, I'm not a spirit. We can't fool around with him. We're going, we're going quite a-ways."

So Pete got off and hollered towards the rider. "We're going. If you don't want a drink, well, that's all right. We're going to leave this whiskey for you." Pete put it on the ground. "You can drink this."

The three of them started back on the old road over the hill. They turned to look back and they saw that rider. He got off his horse and bent down where they had left the whiskey. They couldn't see if he took a drink, but he got off his horse where the bottle was.

When the three of them got to the top of the hill, they took off fast and went for quite a while. When they slowed up, Pete told my dad, "There's a story that a man got killed up there by the lake on top of that hill. When that man got killed, he was drinking and he was on horseback."

They knew it was that same man.

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ABOUT THE AUTHORS

Bill Big Spring, Sr., presently a County Commissioner for Glacier County, lives in East Glacier. He was born January 3, 1919. He has been involved in ranching most of his life on the Blackfeet Reservation. He served in US Army from 1944-1945.

Louie Fish was born November 26, 1914 and lives in Browning, where he has spent most of his lifetime. He worked in the state of Washington on the railroads as well as in Montana with the CCID (Conservation Corps Indian Department) of the Work Projects Administration. Louie attended school through the fourth grade. He is presently employed at the Manpower Office.

Tom Found A Gun attended school through the seventh grade. He married Clara Daniels after a four and half year hitch with the US Army during World War II. He also worked with the CCID of the WPA and for twenty three years with Great Northern Railway. He was born in Browning, October 19, 1919 and presently lives south of East Glacier.

Francis Potts lived a number of years on lower Two Medicine Creek near the old Coldfeet School. In 1938-39 Francis worked with CCID, in 1942 he joined the US Navy and was discharged in 1945. He worked for a brief period in the mines of Butte and was also employed in Idaho, Washington, Oregon and in the California ship yards. He was born December 24, 1921 and attended school through the fourth grade.

Annie Short Robe Running Crane was born October 12, 1883 and lived all of her life on the Blackfeet Reservation. She finished school through the sixth grade. In 1892 she attended the Mission School, in 1893 she attended school at Willow Creek School and from 1894-1902 she attended the Cut Bank Boarding School. Her first husband was Louis Monroe, they were married in 1903. In 1912 she married Joseph Chewing Black Bones. Her third husband was Pete Running Crane. Today Mrs. Running Crane lives at Heart Butte.

Mike Swims Under was born on the Blackfeet Reservation in 1914. There is confusion as to his actual birthdate. The Blackfeet Hospital records it as March 13 and the Catholic Church records it as May 5 (He celebrates both dates). He worked with the CCID before the war and has lived all his life on the Reservation. Mr. Swims Under is a prominent figure in our religious ceremonies.

Dave Wells has been engaged in ranching since earlier days in his life. He worked on many ranches until 1936 when he became engaged in sheep ranching. Today he operates a cattle ranch near Old Agency. He worked with CCID of the WPA and in 1948 was employed in work on the Hungry Horse Dam. He was born March 31, 1905.

ABOUT THE ILLUSTRATOR

Vernon No Runner, born on the Blackfeet Reservation on April 6, 1954, has been a life-long resident of Browning. He began studying art while in high school. He has progressed steadily where today his works are seen in many places in the Northwest. His art consists of mainly early Indian and western scenes.